

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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P R 031531Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1154
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0019

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR EG SY
SUBJ: SYRIAN MEDIA DOWNPLAY SADAT'S WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW

REF: CAIRO 18018 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY:

SYRIAN MEDIA AVOIDED TREATING SADAT-LIPPMAN INTERVIEW
UNTIL JANUARY 2 WHEN ONLY SYRIAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED THAT
DAY GAVE IT CURSORY AND INCOMPLETE TREATMENT. PAPER PURPORTS
SUMMARIZE PARTS OF INTERVIEW, BUT MUCH OF ITS VERSION DOES
NOT APPEAR IN LIPPMAN ARTICLE AS PUBLISHED IN IHT WHILE
SEVERAL IMPORTANT POINTS, INCLUDING LINKUP OF PALESTINIAN
STATE WITH JORDAN, ARE OMITTED. END SUMMARY.

2. ARTICLE STATED: "PRESIDENT SADAT EMPHASIZED THAT
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIFIED POLITICAL COMMAND BETWEEN
SYRIA AND EGYPT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT GOAL, PARTICULARLY
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AT PRESENT STAGE, AND CONFIRMED STABLE FACT THAT ARAB
SOLIDARITY REMAINS FIRM DESPITE SOME DISAGREEMENTS THAT
MAY OCCUR BETWEEN ARAB BROTHERS. THESE ARE ULTIMATELY
SECONDARY SINCE THE STRATEGY IS ONE. PRESIDENT SADAT
EMPHASIZED THAT ARABS CANNOT CEDE ONE INCH OF OCCUPIED
ARAB LANDS AND THAT THERE MUST BE NO COMPROMISE ON RIGHTS
OF PALESTINIANS. TH EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT CALLED FOR RESUMING

MOMENTUM TOWARD JUST AND DURABLE PEACE IN ME AND POINTED OUT THAT PEACE POSSIBLE NOW MORE THAN ANY TIME IN PAST DUE TO EFFORTS EXERTED ON THE HIGHEST LEVELS FOR ACHIEVING THIS PEACE."

3. ONLY STATEMENT IN ARTICLE THAT HAS CLEAR BASIS IN LIPPMAN ARTICLE IS SADAT'S CALL FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORY AND QUICKENING THE MOMENTUM FOR PEACE. OF MORE IMPORT IS WHAT SYRIAN MEDIA CHOSE NOT TO PUBLISH, PARTICULARLY SADAT'S CALL FOR LINKING PALESTINIAN STATE WITH JORDAN AND LEBANON'S PARTICIPATION AT PEACE CONFERENCE. MEDIA ALSO IGNORED SADAT'S REFERENCES TO PROVIDING GUARANTEES FOR ISRAEL, INCLUDING POSSIBLE DEFENSE PACT WITH U.S., AND HIS STATEMENT THAT RECENT UNITY AGREEMENTS DID NOT MEAN THAT HE AND PRESIDENT ASAD WOULD NOT DIFFER AND EXPRESS THOSE DIFFERENCES PUBLICLY. MEDIA GAVE MUCH MORE PROMINENT COVERAGE ON DECEMBER 31 TO INTERVIEW SADAT GRANTED LEBANESE WEEKLY AL-SAYYAD IN WHICH SADAT TRATED SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN UNITY AS EXTENSION OF OCTOBER WAR UNITY AND AS HISTORIC NECESSITY TO SAFEGUARD ARAB NATION. TO EMPHASIZE THIS THEME JANUARY 3 DAMASCUS NEWS BROADCAST OVERLOOKED LIPPMAN-SADAT INTERVIEW AND LED OFF BY QUOTING "ARAB DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN LONDON" AS PRAISING SYRO-EGYPTIAN COMMUNIQUE.

4. AMBASSADOR HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS LIPPMAN INTERVIEW JANUARY 2 WITH SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL WHO SAID HE BELIEVED ASAD WENT TO CAIRO TALKS AND RETURNED FROM THEM MORE PESSIMISTIC THAN EGYPTIANS ON PROSPECTS FOR MODIFYING PLO CONFIDENTIAL

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POSITIONS IN NEAR FUTURE VIS A VIS ISRAEL. SADAT GAVE SYRIANS IMPRESSION HE FELT HE COULD HANDLE THIS PROBLEM AND SOURCE THOUGHT LIPPMAN INTERVIEW MIGHT BE OPENING MOVE TOWARD THIS END. SOURCE FELT EGYPTIANS OUT IN FRONT OF SYRIANS ON THIS QUESTION AND MAY BE TRYING EXERT MORE PRESSURE ON PALESTINIANS THAN THEY PRESENTLY ABLE RESPOND TO POSITIVELY. IN ANY EVENT, SADAT APPEARS TO HAVE "LEAPED OVER" ASAD CONCERNING JORDAN'S ROLE IN PEACE PROCESS, A DEVELOPMENT SOURCE FOUND IRONIC IN THAT ASAD HAD GONE TO CAIRO INTENDING TO CONVINCE SADAT HE SHOULD NOT FORGET JORDAN IN DEVELOPING ARAB STRATEGY FOR CONFERENCE.

5. NOTING THAT SADAT HAD NOT MENTIONED SYRIA WHEN TALKING OF LINKING PALESTINIAN STAT WITH JORDAN, SOURCE SPECULATED THAT EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT MAY HAVE SOUGHT DRIVE WEDGE BETWEEN JORDANIANS AND SYRIANS ALTHOUGH HE ADDED THIS BEHAVIOR WAS MORE TO BE EXPECTED OF FAHMI THAN SADAT. AT MINIMUM, HE FELT SADAT'S COMMENTS WERE INTENDED AS REMINDER THAT EGYPT INTENDED PLAY LEADERSHIP ROLE IN ALL ASPECTS PEACE

ARRANGEMENTS. SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGED MOTIVATION OF SADAT
ON OTHER HAND RE PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN LINKUP MAY
SIMPLY HAVE BEEN DESIRE TO CLEAR AWAY A MAJOR ISRAELI
OBJECTION TO CONCEPT OF PALESTINIAN STATE AND THEREBY
FACILITATE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN PEACE PROCESS.
MURPHY

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